

NEWS

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LET'S TALK TURKEY ABOUT HOLIDAY FOOD SAFETY

All across the country families will gather for meals together this Thanksgiving. It is the perfect time for the Central District Health Department (CDHD) to remind you of some food safety techniques that will help to ensure your holidays are safe and healthy.

The Turkey

Most people buy frozen turkeys and there are three basic methods of thawing those turkeys so they'll be ready to put in the oven; in the refrigerator, in cold water, or in the microwave oven.

Refrigerator: Generally speaking, allow about 24 hours for every 4 to 5 pounds of turkey in a refrigerator at 40° F – more time if the temperature is cooler.

Cold Water: Generally speaking, allow 30 minutes per pound of turkey. Leave it in the plastic wrap it came in or wrap securely so that water isn't allowed to leak through. Submerge the turkey in cold tap water & change the water every 30 minutes until thawed. Cook turkey immediately after it is thawed. Do not refreeze.

Microwave: Check your owner's manual for the size of turkey that will fit in your microwave oven, the minutes per pound, and the power level for thawing.

- Remove all outside wrapping
- Place on a microwave-safe dish to catch any juices that may leak out
- Cook the turkey immediately. Do not refreeze or refrigerate the turkey after thawing in a microwave oven.

Reminder: Remove the giblets from the turkey cavities after thawing. Cook separately.

Roasting the Turkey

The most common method of preparing turkey is to roast it in the oven. These tips are designed for that type of cooking, but also provide general guidelines for safe food handling regardless of how the bird is prepared.

- Set the oven temperature to no lower than 325° F
- Place the turkey or turkey breast on a rack in a shallow roasting pan
- For more even cooking, it is recommended that the stuffing be cooked outside the bird in a casserole. Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of the stuffing; it should reach 165° F.
- If you choose to stuff the turkey, the ingredients can be prepared ahead of time; however, keep wet and dry ingredients separate. Chill all the wet ingredients (butter/margarine, cooked celery and onions, broth, etc.) Mix wet and dry ingredients just before filling the turkey cavities. Fill the cavity loosely. Cook the turkey immediately. Use a food thermometer to make sure the center of the stuffing reaches 165° F.
- The whole turkey should be cooked to 165° F. To check for doneness, insert a food thermometer in the thickest part of the inner thigh without touching the bone. Do not rely on the plastic pop-up thermometers that come in some turkeys.
- A turkey breast should be cooked to 165° F. Insert the thermometer in the thickest part of the breast to check for doneness.
- For quality, let the turkey stand for 20 minutes before carving to allow juices to set. The turkey will carve more easily.
- Remove all stuffing from turkey cavities.

A Clean Kitchen is a Healthy Kitchen

Avoid cross-contamination. Wash hands before touching any other foods, especially those that will not be cooked before serving (salads, appetizers, deviled eggs, baked goods, etc.) Dry hands with a paper towel that can be discarded. Wash and sanitize utensils, the sink, cutting boards, counter and anything else that comes in contact with raw turkey and its juices. (Use a diluted bleach water mixture of 1 tsp bleach for each quart of water.)

Storing Leftovers

- Discard any turkey, stuffing and gravy left out at room temperature for more than 2 hours.
- Divide the leftovers into smaller portions. Refrigerate or freeze in covered shallow containers for quicker cooling.
- Use refrigerated turkey and stuffing within 3 to 4 days. Use gravy within 1 to 2 days.
- If freezing leftovers, use within 2 to 6 months for best quality.

Reheating Foods

Foods should be reheated thoroughly to an internal temperature of 165° F or until hot and steaming. In the microwave food should be covered and rotated so it is heated evenly.

Bacteria and You

Bacteria grow most rapidly in the range of temperature between 41 and 135° F, potentially doubling in number in as little as 20 minutes. This range is known as the Danger Zone. It is best not to allow cooked foods to be in the danger zone for more than two hours. Refrigerate foods in smaller portions and containers for faster cooling so bacteria don't grow as quickly.

For more information on Food Safety visit the Central District Health Department website: www.cdhd.idaho.gov/ehs/food/foodsafetylinks.htm.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture also offers many helpful food safety tips at: http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Seasonal_Food_Safety_Fact_Sheets/index.asp

Turkey-specific safety and cooking tips can found at the Butterball website: <http://www.butterball.com/>